

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION



Enclosure 2b
July 19, 2012

Work Session

RIDE

**Thursday, June 21, 2012
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

Attending: George Caruolo (Chairman), Carolina Bernal, Karin Forbes, Patrick Guida

Absent: Lorne Adrain, Robert Carothers, Mat Santos, Betsy Shimberg

Regent Colleen Callahan joined the meeting in progress.

The meeting convened at 11:30 a.m.

Chairman Caruolo welcomed everyone, acknowledged that the meeting was a Work Session of the Board of Regents duly noticed and asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Approval of Agenda

On a motion duly made by Regent Guida and seconded by Regent Forbes, it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education accept the day's agenda.

Vote: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, C. Bernal, K. Forbes, P. Guida

NAYS: 0

Regent Callahan joined the meeting in progress.

Due to a scheduling conflict with the BOR attorney, which prevented him from staying for the full meeting, Chairman Caruolo asked for a motion to go into executive session at the

onset of the meeting to discuss the Terms and Conditions of Employment for the R.I. School for the Deaf Director pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a).

On a motion duly made by Regent Guida and seconded by Regent Forbes, it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education go into executive session.

Vote: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, C. Bernal, K. Forbes, P. Guida

NAYS: 0

Chairman Caruolo reported that no votes were taken in executive session and asked for a motion to seal the minutes.

On a motion duly made by Regent Callahan and seconded by Regent Bernal, it was

VOTED: That the minutes of the executive session be sealed.

Vote: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, K. Forbes, P. Guida

NAYS: 0

Commissioner's Report

Statewide Longitudinal Data System Grant Award

Commissioner Gist started by reporting how pleased she was about receiving word that the U.S. Department of Education awarded Rhode Island a \$4-million Statewide Longitudinal Data System grant to develop a comprehensive data system that will encompass data about students from prekindergarten through elementary and secondary education, higher education, and the workforce.

Woonsocket - Update

Next, she reported that she had received a letter from the Woonsocket School Committee asking RIDE to have the state assume control of the school district.

Under the provisions of the law, there are some prerequisites that have to be met that have to do with looking at the city's ability to tax at the current taxing rate and then its use of current funds.

The team at RIDE will work with the Governor's Office and the Department of Revenue to make these determinations, and then it will have to be determined whether assuming control of the Woonsocket schools is in the best interest of the students in Woonsocket.

RIDE has recently begun to provide technical support to the Woonsocket School Department to help school leaders make decisions regarding revenues and expenditures and to build expertise and capacity to manage school finances, and RIDE will continue to provide the necessary support to Woonsocket.

RIDE's goal is to help the local community figure out a solution to the current financial situation and how to continue to provide services to students.

Whatever decision is made regarding assuming control of the Woonsocket schools, Commissioner Gist believes it is important that the local community continues to make a fair contribution to the support of its public schools with the goal of ensuring that the Woonsocket schools provide a high-quality public education to the children in Woonsocket.

In light of the current situation, however, the Commissioner commends the teachers and school leaders in Woonsocket, who have continued to fulfill their responsibilities during a time of great fiscal uncertainty, for their commitment to their profession and to the students in the city.

Central Falls

At the close of this school year, RIDE continues to feel encouraged by the progress that Central Falls has made, which is the result of the team working well together.

Since the last report to the BOR, a draft of the 2013 budget is complete. Although there is a large deficit, RIDE continues to work to find savings through a variety of different mechanisms. RIDE also continues to collaborate with the team at the Central Falls School Department, and RIDE has interviewed and helped select a new Director of Finance as well as an Assistant Supt. for Academic Data and Technology; teacher contract negotiations continue, and teacher placements for next year are complete.

Central Falls – School repairs

Although many millions of dollars have been spent on emergency repairs to school buildings across the district, there would need to be additional support from the General Assembly in order to bring the buildings up to where they need to be.

Chairman Caruolo said that when the state took over the funding for Central Falls, he was under the impression that its only obligation was to pay for the schools. Commissioner Gist confirmed that the municipality owns the buildings rather than the state. Chairman Caruolo went on to say that he has received comments from state leaders that, given that we are paying for the school, it should be the obligation of the municipality to maintain the buildings. He predicts that if we are not creative and there is not some resolution, we are going to lose our funding formula or it will be so radically revised that it will completely inhibit our ability to help schools remain current and safe.

New Accountability System

Since receiving the waiver, RIDE has been moving forward with implementation of the new Accountability System and with the 2012 School Classifications.

Data discs have been sent to every district, state-operated school, and charter public school, containing all of the data RIDE used to calculate 2012 Classifications, plus a technical description of the classification process, allowing for districts to review everything before it is shared publicly.

Last week, RIDE held a webinar for all superintendents to help build understanding of the classification process and the support and intervention we will provide for low-achieving schools. Teams from 23 districts participated.

Last Friday, all superintendents were invited in to RIDE for face-to-face meetings to discuss and explain their data and school classifications. Eight superintendents and their teams came into RIDE for these meetings, and three more have scheduled meetings to discuss their data.

Over the next two weeks, superintendents and their teams will have time to review and verify the data and to bring to our attention any concerns about their classifications. RIDE plans to release the 2012 classifications in mid-July.

Budget Update

Commissioner Gist went on to say how pleased she is that the budget that the General Assembly approved and that the Governor signed last week retains Governor Chafee's proposal to fully fund the Funding Formula for aid to education and to accelerate the payments to districts that are currently underfunded. The approved budget is very much in line with the budget the BOR recommended to the Governor last year.

Legislative Update

Key Education Bills that passed in 2012 include:

- CPAB – legislation will add two members representing the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities to the Certification Policy Advisory Board.
- AP Courses – Subject to appropriation, the Board of Governors and the Board of Regents will work jointly to establish clear, specific, and challenging training guidelines for teachers of AP courses.

Again, subject to appropriation, this training will provide professional development that will enable teachers and administrators to create strong and effective AP programs in their schools.

- Virtual Learning – This legislation created the R.I. statewide virtual education act, to promote the use of and quality of virtual courses as part of public education in R.I.
- Student member of the Board of Regents – This act would add one student member to the Board of Regents, who will be ex-officio and nonvoting.
- Kindergarten start-up costs – Subject to appropriation, up to four (4) districts would be eligible to receive funding to offset a portion of the reasonable, one-time start-up costs for full-day kindergarten. This program is scheduled to begin in September 2013.
- A House resolution created a Legislative Commission to study and review standardized-testing programs in secondary education.

Necessity for School Construction Projects

At a future meeting, RIDE will be asking for Regents' approval of the next set of school-construction projects for district-owned schools reimbursed through the Housing Aid process for the Lincoln and Pawtucket School Districts.

As with previous projects, these have undergone rigorous review under the multistage necessity of school construction process and are in compliance with the school-construction regulations.

Each district worked with registered building professionals to reduce the scopes of work to address only immediate health and safety issues.

Pending release of funds from the Senate and House Finance Committees, RIDE will bring these projects for BOR review and approval consideration.

Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Caruolo deferred additional Chairman's Remarks.

Discussion Items

Virtual Learning – Draft Regulations

After several months of working through the process to develop the Virtual Learning Regulations, RIDE now has a draft for BOR approval.

Through a collaborative effort between RIDE and R.I. legislators, these regulations align with and support the Statewide Virtual Learning statute.

The goal of these regulations is to ensure that virtual education, digital learning, and blended learning in R.I. are of high quality, promote flexibility, and broaden educational opportunities for all students.

During the public comment period (April 4th through June 8, 2012) RIDE staff sought input on these regulations from a variety of stakeholders, including:

- Members of the Rhode Island community
- District-level personnel
- RI Legislative Textbook Commission
- Technology and Online Learning Vendors
- Other states' technology directors.

RIDE also received endorsement from the President and CEO of the internationally recognized online-learning organization, iNACOL.

RIDE will be asking for BOR approval of these regulations at its July meeting.

Sharon Lee, Director of the Office of Multiple Pathways, went over the feedback from public comment, which included addressing the issue of teacher certification for online learning, dual enrollment, program monitoring of those districts offering online learning, and training and support for teachers.

Charter School Renewals

Prior to discussing the recommendations for the renewal of the next cohort of charter public schools, Chairman Caruolo proposed holding off on discussing the non-renewal recommendation of the Academy for Career Exploration Charter School until the public has an opportunity to address the BOR at its next meeting.

Commissioner Gist explained that when she came to R.I. she discovered a charter-renewal process that was very inadequate, both in terms of the support given to charter public schools and accountability for charters. She has since completely changed that process, and, beginning with this cohort, RIDE is now on track to make renewal decisions one year in advance of each school's charter term, which is important for the school that is up for renewal and also in the event that the school is not being recommended for renewal.

RIDE is recommending five-year renewals to the Beacon Charter High School, the Paul Cuffee Charter School, the International Charter School, and the Kingston Hill Academy.

The Kingston Hill Academy is being recommended for a five-year renewal contingent upon their completion of a few matters relating primarily to board governance.

Discussion of Testing and Passing Score – Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

At the previous meeting of the BOR, the Regents requested more time to discuss the test for ESL teachers.

RIDE has since prepared a brief document outlining more specific information about the analysis conducted for test content and a recommended passing score based on the concerns expressed at the last meeting.

Since the last meeting, RIDE has continued to review the ETS test and the initial recommended passing score of 151. Commissioner Gist still feels confident that this is the right recommendation.

The ETS test is very much a content test to assess teachers' knowledge particular to ESL-related topics, as identified by the national TESOL standards, and RIDE is confident the content of the test fully meets these requirements.

RIDE discussed the test with ELL national experts who oversee the WIDA Consortium, which is the group that oversees the English Language Proficiency Test for students, and they underscored the need for ELL teachers to have a strong linguistics background.

As to the recommended passing score, RIDE is confident that the initial recommended passing score of 151 was an appropriate measure of the knowledge and skills of beginning ESL teachers and at that score test-takers need to answer 71 percent of the answers on that test correctly.

Although Commissioner Gist stands behind her recommendation for the test and passing score, she realizes that Chairman Caruolo had some reservations, and, in the event that he does not feel comfortable with her recommendation of 151, she is prepared to recommend a lower passing score, but that would not be her first choice.

Chairman Caruolo suggested that RIDE staff sit down with the staff at RIC, since there is no sense in RIDE's making a change, particularly if it has reservations about it, if the people from RIC are not in any way assuaged. Commissioner Gist went on to say that RIDE staff has talked with the folks at RIC and that her second recommendation is consistent with their testimony and does meet their expectations. She does, however, have some reservations in making a recommendation based solely on making comfortable people whose programs need to improve and who need to raise their own expectations.

The BOR asked whether or not RIDE staff had a chance to not only sit with RIC staff but also with CPAB (Certification Policy Advisory Board), to which Lisa Foehr answered that she attended a CPAB meeting that previous Monday, at which the topic of linguistics was once again discussed.

Chairman Caruolo suggested that if we end up lowering the score that it be done for a year, and as for the test, he does not feel comfortable with surrendering the choice of tests to the college. It is a legitimate test by a legitimate company, and it is our responsibility on this end of things to make determinations in the best interest of children in R.I. schools.

Commissioner Gist ended by stating that although she maintains her recommendation of a cut score of 151, she would be willing to present to the BOR a recommended cut score of 146.

On a motion duly made by Regent Guida and seconded by Regent Callahan, it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting.

Vote: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, K. Forbes, P. Guida

NAYS: 0.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.